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-NEWS RELEASE-

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO ALLOW 17 YEAR-OLDS TO VOTE WINS OVERWHELMING SUPPORT IN HOUSE

**BYSIEWICZ SAYS 10,000 YOUNG ADULTS ONE STEP CLOSER TO RIGHT TO
VOTE; SENATE FLOOR NEXT STOP FOR RESOLUTION**

HARTFORD: Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz is thrilled that today that more than three-quarters (135-12) of the House of Representatives voted in favor of HJ-21, a resolution that would allow thousands of 17 year-olds to vote in a primary election, so long as they turn 18 before the general election. The resolution is now headed to the Senate floor for consideration.

“Today, more than any other time in recent memory, young people across Connecticut are interested and involved in the political process,” said Bysiewicz. “In this time of economic insecurity, war, and environmental peril, young people clearly want a say in the direction of this country; allowing them a head-start in becoming involved in civic life just makes sense and will go a long way in creating life-long voters.”

House Joint Resolution No. 21 states, “That article fourteenth of the amendments to the Constitution of the State be amended to authorize seventeen-year-old persons who pre-register to vote and who will attain the age of eighteen years on or before the day of a regular election to vote in a primary for such regular election.”

The United States Constitution does not deny 17 year-olds the right to vote. The 26th Amendment to the United States Constitution only states that the right of citizens who are eighteen years of age or older to vote shall not be denied by the United States or by any State on account of age. Taking into account that the Constitution does not bar states

from lowering the voting age, some states have done exactly that. In the past several years, nine other states in the nation have passed measures that allow 17 year-olds to vote in primaries so long as they turn 18 by the general election. The states are; Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Mississippi, Nebraska, North Carolina, Ohio, and Virginia. Currently, several state legislatures including Arizona, Illinois, and New Hampshire are considering proposals that would allow 17 year-olds to vote in primaries.

State Rep. James Spallone, of Essex, is a co-sponsor of the resolution and deserves credit for his leadership. “I want to thank Rep. Spallone for his leadership on this,” said Bysiewicz. “Of course, we still have a long way to go before this becomes law and I look forward to working with senators on both sides of the aisle to open up our electoral process for the next generation of voters.”

There are two ways an amendment can be made to the Connecticut Constitution. One option is that three quarters of the House (114/151) and Senate (27/36) approve the amendment and then it goes onto the ballot in the next general election that falls on an even numbered year. The other option is for a simple majority in both the House and Senate to approve the measure in two separate legislative sessions. If that happened, it would then go onto the ballot in the next general election that falls on an even numbered year.

Last year a similar resolution won wide support in the General Assembly but fell 9 votes short of having the support of three quarters of the House. The resolution was not raised in the Senate.

Over the last 5 months, more than 55,000 residents have registered to vote. More than 13,000 of the newly registered voters are between the ages of 18 and 29.

The Office of the Secretary of the State maintains an aggressive voter registration program. As part of her effort to increase voter registration in Connecticut, Secretary Bysiewicz this past year registered more than 1,000 high school students.